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Murder in the Cathedral: Ancient Theme in Modern Garb

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Abstract

Murder in the Cathedral is the first complete play written by T. S. Eliot which deals with an ancient and medieval theme and a plot of the twelfth century. The story was written by poet-dramatists as Tennyson with his play named Becket and Christopher Fry who wrote *Curtmantle*, both wrote the story of Thomas Becket but such plays were not successful in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because the authors used a language too far remote from their own time.

This study attempts to show the challenges faced T. S. Eliot in writing an ancient anecdote with a modern and contemporary language for contemporary people. The research is an analytical and critical attempt that tries to display, to what extent, Eliot thrived in writing the play in a language close to the language of his own people. It comprises an introduction shedding light on the historical background then is followed by critical and analytical views on the events of the play presenting first the events before

the action. The process shifts to the next part illustrating the action, focusing on the use of language of the play, with special focus on the structure and style.

Key words:

Contemporary language, drama, Medieval, *Murder in the Cathedral*, structure, style, T. S. Eliot

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

T. S. Eliot commenced in writing his complete successful first play *Murder in the Cathedral*, which opened the way to fulfil his career as a dramatist. He has fought to make *Murder in the Cathedral*, which deals with “the struggle between individual conscience and secular power” (Woods, 2013, p. 355), a play to be received by the people of modern twentieth century.

King Henry II selected Becket as the Canterbury Archbishop hoping to reduce the authority of the Church over Crown. The intention of the King aimed to manage the affairs of both the State and Church. The king, by appointing Becket Archbishop, is aiming to take hold of both powers in his hands by hook or crook. On the insistence of the King, Becket unenthusiastically accepted the task but he quitted the chancellorship of King Henry. According to the new duty, Becket deserted the luxurious life he experienced. The king “reassigned Becket from chancellor to archbishop, expecting that his friend would make the church a royal ally, but Becket soon sided instead with ecclesiastical over royal authority” (Schrock, 2014). In his new career, Becket determined to live as an ascetic of excessive control and tolerance. As a result of the sudden alteration of his way of living, Becket started to work utterly

for the benefit of the Church, on the contrary of the expectation and desire of the king. Shortly, a severe clash appeared between him and his old friend, new enemy, King Henry II. In the meanwhile, Becket denied being a puppet in the crown's hands.

BEFORE THE ACTION⁽¹⁾

Eliot does not episode the full anecdote of Archbishop Thomas Becket but he narrows it to the latest phase in which he was murdered. The Archbishop was notable in the Western European states during the Middle Ages and “was killed at the altar of Canterbury Cathedral” (Baldrige, 2013). Eliot, in this play, presents the Chorus of poor women of Canterbury, four tempters and four knights to escalate the limit of the action of his story.

Murder in the Cathedral “open(s) with Becket returning after seven years abroad, to a scene which has been prepared by a chorus of Canterbury women, who speak in striking simple language” (Brooker, et al, 2005, p. 319) showing their own simplicity. The women of Canterbury have no great ambitions, all what they wish is a simple easy safe life even if it is poor. In their opinion, safe life means that the Archbishop should be away from his cathedral, to stay in France. If he returns to his church, problems shall

(1) Action refers here to the act of assassinating

arise and his presence will create instability and violence. The chorus prophesies:

Seven years and the summer is over
 Seven years since the Archbishop left us,
 He who was always kind to his people.
 But it would not be Well if he should return.
 King rules or barons rule;
 We have suffered various oppression,
 But mostly we are left to our own devices,
 And we are content if we are left alone.⁽¹⁾

Unsophisticated people wish unassuming way of living; they are satisfied even if they are not wealthy. The chorus of women comment that they have suffered greatly because of the conflict between the church and crown that the return of Becket from his self-exile in France will flame the situation again then the atmosphere will not be pleasant for all. In *Murder in the Cathedral* “the chorus is the conservative soul of the drama” (Lockerd, 2014, p. 140) and it “takes part in the action, comments on it and provides mood and atmosphere” (Cuddon, 1998, p. 134). The used language of the choruses denotes moving life, and that is obvious in the action verbs such as the following instances; “When the chorus recites, ‘The New Year waits, breathes, waits, whispers in darkness’, the audience experiences no

(1) Tucker, S. Marison. 1953. *Twenty-Five Modern Plays*. 3rd Ed. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers. p. 883. [All passages on *Murder in the Cathedral* are quoted from this source; number of pages will be added.]

aesthetic discomfort, but only gratitude for the brilliant verb ‘breathes’” (Raine, 2006, p. 123). ‘Breathes’ signifies hope for a better life.

On his return from France, Archbishop Thomas anticipates suffering from the King. He returns to Canterbury without any alteration in thoughts and mood. The chorus of the women of Canterbury speaks anticipating the danger hidden in the event. They do not wish unnatural incident to occur to defile their unchanging trivial and petty life. They are also gratified to live an unexciting life full of sorrows. They talk about the expected dangerous happening that is hidden from their consciousness.

The action of the play is divided into two central acts: the first act deals with the mental and spiritual preparation of Becket to be assassinated, however the second act reveals the expected slaying of Archbishop Thomas Becket. The two acts are associated with a pure prose oratory, the ‘Interlude’ as a final speech of Archbishop Becket. The heart of the play exhibits a classical body of tragedy as the prodigious artists, Aeschylus and Sophocles, in ancient Greece, designed it. Eliot begins the play at a late point in the life of Thomas Becket to secure full dramatic efficacy as a classical tragedy when the hero Thomas is so close to his doom. In such a way, Eliot has reached the awareness, conciseness, value and usefulness of classical tragedy. He was conscious of the features of Greek tragedy that his

“drama often sought to imbue the settings and plots of contemporary commercial theatre with the intellectually respectable fatalism associated with Greek tragedy” (Rabey, 2014, p. 9). He imitates Aeschylus in inaugurating the play near its catastrophe for the reason to invigorate modern drama and chose ritual components for his play via adapting the early Greek ritual into liturgy.

Murder in the Cathedral starts with the first act, which is indispensable to the progress of the action. The action is internal, dealing with a hidden earlier clash between Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury and four tempters. The tempters “are the diverse evil cogitations of Becket” (Sarker, 2008. p. 161). Without such interpretations between the four tempters and Archbishop Thomas, the spectators will not appropriately recognize the great conquest of Archbishop Becket over the four knights later in part two of the play when they assassinate him. He was assassinated inside a house – cathedral – in which he should be safe. The first act of the play illustrates the tempters in their endeavor to lure the Archbishop into evading his doom “To do the right deed for the wrong reason” (Part One p. 892).

The priests appear forward after the Chorus finishes where the task of the characters of priests is to throw light on the merits and demerits of King Henry II and Archbishop Becket. “All the Priests, however, wonder whether the

arrival of the Archbishop would mean war or peace” (Tiwari, and Maneesha. 2007, p. 83). They are preoccupied with the notion that the coming back of their Archbishop may result in dispute with the king as happened before Becket’s decampment seven years ago.

The First Priest comprehends that the state is turning to demolition as a consequence of the tension between the two arrogant men, the King and Becket. The Priest, in the first act and before Becket advent from France, depicts Becket as a proud one demonstrating the previous relationship with King Henry II when Becket was a chancellor. He astonishingly inquires,

What, is the exile ended, is
our Lord Archbishop
Reunited with the King? What reconciliation
Of two proud men? What peace can be found
To grow between the hammer and the anvil (Part One p.
884)?

The priest conceives that resolution is impossible because the two poles are too stubborn. Peace is surrounded by pride. What attracts our eyes is the language that Eliot masterfully modernized, it can go with the current tongue of modern common people and that is an ambition for Eliot. The Second Priest remarks on the intrigues resulted from politics, which will cause ruin in Canterbury. He says:

earlier

And weightier ones: those of the Chancellorship.

See how the late ones rise! The master of
policy

Whom all acknowledged, should guide the
state again (Part One p. 888).

However, the Third Priest is not optimistic to feel any real harmony between the 'hammer' and the 'anvil'; his perspective is contrary to the previous two priests.

Becket arrives with an earnest welcome from common people. He realizes that Canterbury is no more a place of rest and security, as he expects deception from the side of the King. He summons up his past in a discussion with the tempters as ghosts of his past and his previous life. The tempters expose the hidden ambition in his mind reminding him of his inner secular grandeur. The tempters symbolize a number of longings and enticements that sparkle in Becket's thoughts flashing with secular longings and terminating with the greatest desire of searching for glory even after death. The first starts saying:

Remembering all the good time past.
Your Lordship won't despise an old friend
out of favour?

Old Tom, gay Torn, Becket of London,
Your Lordship won't forget that -evening on
the river

When the King, and you and I were all
friends together (Part One p. 887).

The Second Tempter continues his efforts to allure Becket again to the king:

The Chancellorship that you
resigned

When you were made Archbishop that was
a mistake

On your part still may be regained. Think,
my Lord,

Power obtained grows to glory, (Part One p. 888).

All the tempters “presented to Archbishop Thomas in the first act of *Murder in the Cathedral* are each an offer of an alternative self-identity ... his ‘strife with shadows’ – do not come from some point external to him, but already subsist within him: they are already features of his character that he may choose to embrace or reject as his own truth” (Jensen, 2010, p. 13).

The Fourth Tempter talks of sophisticated eminence, reputation, rectitude and honor. He “is the most surprising, bringing the glory and honour of martyrdom itself as the substance of his temptation” (Jensen, 2010, p. 13). He is the most hazardous precarious of all tempters in which he assures Becket of power after demise, attracting him with the most desirous ambition. “That would be spiritual pride” (Dumont, 2002).

As you do not know me, I do
not need a name,

And, as you know me, that is why I come.

You know me, but have never seen my face.

To meet before was never time or place (Part One p. 890).

He surprises Becket because Becket did not consider that he would encounter four tempters as he did with three priests; he expected to meet three. According to Becket, the fourth is the most harmful one who, on the contrary of the previous three, urges Becket to stand sturdily against the king's influential purposes. "The [Fourth] Tempter lures Becket towards seizing overriding power" (Das, 2007, p. 84). Becket is confused by the dispute of the Fourth Tempter who faces him with the damning contemplation of welcoming death for the benefit and interest of glorifying himself. Becket is assured that the offer of the last tempter is the highest betrayal of the previous three tempters in which he tempts Becket to do the correct feat for the immoral reason.

The natural vigour in the venial sin

Is the way in which our lives begin (Part One p. 892).

After the first act, comes the prose Interlude, which is a symbol of medievalism as well as modernism. It unites the two acts of the play as one. Becket in his oration is preparing himself for his doom that ends the first act, and the execution of his sacrifice shall occur in the final act.

THE ACTION

The second act of the play begins when the Chorus comments on the sort of harmony between Becket and King Henry, they are pessimistic expecting no hope of real reconciliation or settlement:

When the leaf is out on the tree, when the
 elder and may
 Burst over the stream, and the air is clear
 and high,
 And voices trill at windows, and children
 tumble in front of the door,
 What work shall have been done, what
 wrong
 Shall the bird's song cover, the green tree
 cover, what wrong
 Shall the fresh earth cover? We wait, and
 the time is short
 But waiting is long (Part Two p. 894).

Then the knights arrive as men of King Henry sent to Becket with the prior purpose of murdering him. The events occur in the second act that shows a portrait about the alterations of Becket's nature since he was young and the recent moment. The four knights came with their swords flashing as of fire bringing death to Becket. They surround Becket with risk to re-announce his obedience to King

Henry II; the four knights direct their speech loudly to Becket saying:

Absolve all those you have excommunicated.

Resign, the powers you have arrogated.

Restore to the King the money you appropriated.

Renew the obedience you have violated (Part Two p. 899).

However, Becket proudly refuses all their attempts then the four knights walk closer round him, abusing him: “Traitor! traitor! traitor! traitor” (Part Two p. 900)! Then they attack him to death.

After the knights commit the process of assassination, they move to the obverse of the playhouse to deliver some words right to the spectators. They wish to defend their work and justify their commission. The talking of the four knights gives the impression of contemporary civil debaters as they talk to spectators of twentieth century. “In Murder, as the knights seek to justify their action, Eliot gives us the authentic modern corporate voice of conference-speak” (Raine, 2006, p. 123) in modern style and terminology. The speeches has the manner of gracious persuasion that enlightens the spectators and shows like enlightens that the Knights are not content in committing this task since they foresee that the anticipated reward will be exile if not death. They, alternatively, address the audiences:

First Knight. We beg you to give us
your attention for a few moments. We

know that you may be disposed to judge unfavourably of our action (Part Two p. 900)....

Second Knight. I am afraid I am not anything like such an experienced speaker ... But there is one thing I should like to say, and I might as well say it at once. It is this: in what we have done, and whatever you may think of it, we have been perfectly disinterested. [The other KNIGHTS: 'Hear! hear!'] We are not getting anything out of this. We have much more to lose than to gain. We are four plain Englishmen who put our country first (Part Two p. 900)...

Third Knight. ...

You are hardheaded sensible people, as I can see, and not to be taken in by emotional clap-trap. I therefore ask you to consider soberly: what were the Archbishop's aims? and what are King Henry's aims? In the answer to these questions lies the key to the problem. (Part Two p. 901)...

Fourth Knight. ... I have nothing to add along their particular lines of argument. What I have to say may be put in the form of a question: Who killed the Archbishop? As you have been eye-witnesses of this lamentable scene, you may feel some surprise at my putting it in this way...

While the late Archbishop was Chancellor, no one, under the King, did more to weld the country together, to give it the unity, the stability, order, tranquillity, and justice that it so badly needed. From the moment he became Archbishop, he completely reversed his policy; he showed himself to be utterly indifferent to the fate of the country, to be, in fact, a monster of egotism, a menace to society. This egotism grew upon him, until it became at last an undoubted mania. Every means that had been tried to conciliate him, to restore him to reason, had failed. Now I have unimpeachable evidence to the effect that before he left France he clearly prophesied, in the presence of numerous witnesses, that he had not long to live, and that he would be killed in England. (Part Two p. 902)

It is the ingenuity of Eliot to create a “way of appropriating something he needs but in a different way than the original need: ‘Tradition.’... ‘ought to be engaged on something new.’ It is a case, so to speak, of the difference – if difference there is – between Norman sawtooth ornament of the tenth century, say, and twentieth-

century” (Shand-Tucci, 2005, p. 511), which means a way or a style of using terminology different from the twelfth century but close from modern age.

The four knights, in their final speech propose to change the attentions of the spectators and their judgment of the occasion to make the process of murder seems a suicide and Becket deserves it. The knights “break the faintly medieval decorum of the play to speak in the frank terms of a modern English politician. This mingling of archaic and modern political rhetoric is typical of high modernist art” (Wilson, 2016). The four knights aim to make the spectators permit the happening of the act of killing via utilizing modern political and rhetorical techniques as a result of the “confrontation between King Henry and Thomas Becket, which culminates in the murder of the archbishop” (Däumer, 2006). In addition, the knights denote in their speech that the archbishop, “a monster of egotism” (Part Two p. 902), efficiently plotted his demise.

AFTER THE ACTION

The knights are shown in diverse garbs throughout the play. Initially they appear before Becket as tempters to lure him to non-spiritual goals. Then they are expertly converted into the four knights to achieve their duty against Becket. It is the masterfulness of Eliot to make actors double-role; in the first part, we have the tempters, in the second they

themselves perform the roles of the knights. After performing the murder case, they “appear as modern-day versions of themselves, versions who address the audience directly” (Matthews, 2013, p. 176). And Eliot comments on such style in a lecture at Harvard University after more than a decade from writing *Murder in the Cathedral*, that in composing a drama, the dramatist has to remember a fact which tells that audiences and readers are going to accept a play, which comprise real dramatic significance as it has different characters.

THE STRUCTURE

Eliot involved definite devices of the Greek and assimilated them with splendid talent. He has written *Murder in the Cathedral* by enhancing the play with a diversity of methods suitable for modern speaking. *Murder in the Cathedral* denotes a significant landmark in Eliot’s strategy of a new structure that amalgamates serious events with contemporary speech and highlights its capacity for a varied range of dialogue. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot has meritoriously developed the sources of his earlier tentative play, *The Rock*. *Murder in the Cathedral* shows comparison, similarity, and parallelism between the past and the present.

The involvement of the spectators in the event as a witness in a gathering like the passive chorus makes *Murder*

in the Cathedral a counterpart of the medieval drama which proves that T. S. Eliot is a medieval-modernist. Moreover, “Eliot might be called a medieval modernist because of his admiration for the organic and spiritual community of Middle Ages together with its ‘impersonal’ conception of art” (Saler, 2001, p.17); Eliot, through *Murder in the Cathedral*, has implemented characters without direct names except the protagonist and the king. The other characters are impersonal; he fabricated characters such as the poor women of Canterbury, the three priests, the four tempters and the four knights.

Eliot cleverly could mix religious doctrine with Greek legendary themes and style. The blend of religious drama of the Middle Ages with the pre-religion drama of the Greeks results in a great original literary work done by Eliot in this play. *Murder in the Cathedral* “has a real dramatic action at its centre and that it expresses a powerful aesthetic coherence of its own that is independent of the religious ideas that stimulated its creator” (Jensen, 2010, p184). The play has been without doubt adapted to religious doctrine as well as to Aeschylus’s tragedy. Eliot’s cyclicity about the Middle Ages signifies a union of his attitude with modernism which is central to the common lifecycle “in a culture and society best characterized by the words unity, integration, and order” (Del Dotto, 2010, p. 125). That means; Eliot used a language of liberalism of all ages and

places, not restricted to any period or age to emphasize its neutrality but such language, according to Eliot, needs to be understood by contemporary readers and audiences.

The Chorus denotes a commanding speech illuminating that it has glanced at the profound significance of the action. It is the talent of Eliot to make the speech of the chorus simple and of modern poetic style. The poetic language “of the choruses was as simple and immediate in its meaning as our own daily lives, and the transition into satirical modern prose at the end” (Brooker, et al. 2004, p. 326). The chorus chants:

Here is no continuing city, here
is no abiding stay.
Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the
profit, certain the danger.
O late late late, late is the time, late too
late, and rotten the year;
Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey
the sky, grey grey grey.
O Thomas, return, Archbishop; return, return
to France (Part One p. 885).

Eliot's style is 'neutral' that means there is no direct hint to the past or to the present. For that purpose, Eliot engaged numerical adjectives to recognize characters, such as 'the first, the second, the third, and the fourth' to signify the characters. Grover Smith supports the idea

saying “Eliot took a good deal of care to make the historical actions accord with the most trustworthy accounts by Becket’s contemporaries” (Grover, 2000, p. 182). Eliot genuinely made the tempters with numbers to be a link between the first act and the second. Moreover, to support his idea, the play has the nature of modernism, Eliot honorably endeavors to make the spectators involved in the action by witnessing as the same as the chorus of women of Canterbury. He planned to raise queries inside the spectators to fill their judgments with action and to form a mood inside them as witnesses and similarly to participant in the action of the play through witnessing.

Regarding the manipulation of language, Shakespeare penned his dramas in a language of his time, which is called Shakespearean English, Eliot dexterously did the same in *Murder in the Cathedral*, and he has utilized a language approximate to his age. “He clearly had Tennyson among others in mind when he pointed to rigidity of versification which could result from a tendency to follow Shakespeare too closely. This is one of the besetting faults in Tennyson’s Becket” (Seed, 1982). Eliot employed the Georgian mode of writing and his intention of instituting a forceful tradition of modern drama directed him to formulate a modern style of his plays. He “succeeded magnificently in speaking to all sorts and conditions of men” (Kirk, 2008, p. 347) in his contemporary time. His

visions in this respect are shown in several critical essays such as ‘A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry’, ‘Hamlet and his Problems’, ‘The Three Voices of Poetry’, ‘Poetry and Drama’ and many other essays deal with Eliot’s views on modern drama emphasizing the necessity of utilizing contemporary language.

Dramatists need to use as close as normal modern speech with proper adjustments and suitable selection of expressions and vocabularies. If such situations were well vindicated, then the modern spectators would accept drama. On such preoccupation clues in Eliot’s mind, the significance of the play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, lies in its untried style and in making the dialogues out of a language that is articulated by the people of the contemporary and common society with its mechanicality. Eliot “did not use the language of the twelfth century, neither Anglo-Saxon nor Norman French. For Eliot thought that the language should be lively enough to concentrate the attention of a modern audience” (Singh, 2005, pp.135). He insisted in writing his first successful play, *Murder in the Cathedral* that the employed language should be proximate to the language of his own time. In a parallel situation, a dramatist needs to let the characters and their circumstances appear similar to the original event that occurred.

Murder in the Cathedral is a milestone in the history of the recent theatre of English because it demonstrates that modern drama is not only acceptable but also elegant and can achieve a triumph similar to the graceful drama of ancient ages. It “is a drama ‘about a situation and a quality of life’, which strikingly corresponds with common understanding of morality plays (quality of life) as well as with modern definitions of the theatre of the absurd” (Gibinska, and Witalisz, 2012, p. 193).

Eliot uses a neutral style that is not an indication of the past or present. He indicates the play’s modern significance since his theme is medieval. The medium is without a glitch suited to the reactions expressed. “The genre of *Murder in the Cathedral* is the element of the supernatural. Eliot’s play presumes a supernatural realm that modernity has largely neutralized” (Neumayr, 2009, p. 26). Furthermore, “In the play he uses the medieval setting because it helps his purpose, since the medieval categories of thought and organization are those he finds most suitable; yet the Tempters, and the Knights, who are the Tempters’ embodiments, are rightly played as modern figures” (Grant, Michael. 1997, p. 460).

Eliot has defined the staple linguistic methods of his plays in an essay called ‘Poetry and Drama’. He comments on the play *Murder in the Cathedral* that the style and the language might not be accurately of modern conversation,

as the author had to shift the audience back to a historical story but with great innovation. He declared “that he meant to present a vocabulary and structure for the play that were not quite current but would not suggest to the audience any particular period style, so that his language could be untethered, floating between the play’s historical setting and the audience’s present” (Malamud, 2009, p. 65). In addition, he desired to connect the minds of the audience with the contemporary significance of the situation.

The play, for its importance, deserves more deep analysis where Eliot himself realized in writing *Murder in the Cathedral* that the used language ought to be equal of every day speech in the modern age. The language should be more elevated than everyday speech in which everyday speech is lower than a literary prose/poetic speech. At the same way, the dramatist needs to mix between the period of the event and the factual period of modern audiences. The spectators should be shifted to a period of the action. Consequently, Eliot attempted to make the situation, the event and the characters to be real and innovative as happened in the time of action. Therefore, he skillfully integrated and amalgamated the past with modernity. On such basis, it can be said “*Murder in the cathedral* is Eliot’s most successful integration of his dramatic theories” (Smith, 1967, p. 110).

CONCLUSION

In *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot used a language near to the period of the event which deals with the slaughter of Becket with various proper hints of the present twentieth century. “Eliot himself would turn to playwriting in the decade following *The Waste Land* and Shaw’s *Saint Joan*, writing a hagiographical tragedy of his own, *Murder in the Cathedral*, that would stand as the defining the achievement of modernist British verse drama” (Del Dotto, 2010, p. 101). In producing this play, Eliot faced several problems and greatly worked on solving his complications such as the averting of blank verse of the fifteenth century as well as linking the hole between the daily speech of contemporary society and the language of historical period of the play.

T.S. Eliot opined that the English literature is part of the European literary tradition since Homer. He succeeded in using the technique of the chorus and its poetic language to fit modern theatre, in addition to that, the “character's perception of reality is closely connected to the kind of language he speaks. Thus the knights, who represent the lowest level of humanity in the play, speak colloquial modern prose. Their defense of themselves in Act II makes use of all the common clichés of modern life. Their language is entirely secular” (Abbott, 2003, p. 102) which prove the masterfulness of Eliot in manipulation of diverse style and structure of language.

It is both through his theory and practice that Eliot did much to bring about a revival of modern drama. On such opinion, T. S. Eliot succeeded in writing *Murder in the Cathedral* to integrate old and medievalism with modernism. His “imbedding of a modern hero in a medieval storyline implies the capacity of the medieval to collapse into, and inhabit, the modern” (Krystyna, 2014). He utilized contemporary language not that of the twelfth century and used the ancient techniques such as theme, chorus, plot and characters but he made the language modern. Eliot indisputably incorporated the features of the Greek drama with the elements of Christian drama of the twelfth century in writing *Murder in the Cathedral* as a prosperous modern play. Therefore, Eliot prospered in writing the play in a modern language close from the language of his own people to confirm his ability of writing an ancient theme in modern accepted dress.

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جريمة اغتيال في الكاتدرائية: قضية قديمة في قالب حديث

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المستخلص:

مسرحية "جريمة قتل في الكاتدرائية" تعتبر أول مسرحية كاملة ألفها المسرحي والشاعر ت. س. إليوت تتطرق إلى فكرة وموضوع قديم متعلق بالقرون الوسطى تحديداً في القرن الثاني عشر، وقد كَتَبَ عن قصة 'توماس بيكيت' أكثر من شاعر مسرحي مثل 'تينيسون' في مسرحيته المسماة 'بيكيت' وكذلك 'كريستوفر فراي' في مسرحيته المسماة 'Curtmantle' ولكن هذه المسرحيات لم تلق نجاحاً حقيقياً في القرنين التاسع عشر والعشرين لأن الكاتبين استخدموا لغة بعيدة جداً عن لغة عصرهم وبالتالي كانت هذه المسرحيات غير ناجحة. تسعى هذه الدراسة لعرض التحدي الذي واجه 'ت. س. إليوت' في تأليف قصة قديمة في شكل مسرحي ولكن باستخدام ثوب لغوي حديث لتُعرض على مشاهدين في نفس عصر المؤلف. هذا البحث يستخدم المنهج التحليلي والنقدي الذي يحاول عرض مدى نجاح 'إليوت' في كتابة المسرحية بلغة قريبة من لغة عصره. الدراسة تشمل على مقدمة تلقي الضوء على الخلفية التاريخية، ثم تُتبع بدراسة نقدية وتحليلية عن أحداث المسرحية مستعرضاً

الاحداث قبل تنفيذ الجريمة ثم الانتقال إلى الجزء التالي موضحاً طريقة تنفيذ الجريمة مركزاً على الاستخدام اللغوي في المسرحية وبشكل خاص التركيز على البناء والأسلوب اللغوي.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

البناء اللغوي، البناء اللغوي، الأسلوب، القرون الوسطى، المسرح، 'ت. س. إليوت'، 'جريمة قتل في الكاتدرائية'، لغة معاصرة.



مجلة
جامعة طيبة
للآداب والعلوم الإنسانية

العدد ١٤

السَّنة السَّابعة

١٤٣٩هـ / ٢٠١٨م

حقوق الطبع محفوظة لجامعة طيبة